

RUSSELL COUNTY

Honorable Eric B. Funderburk

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Council Priorities

1. Drug abuse treatment for juveniles is established for Russell County.

Establish a juvenile substance abuse program to combat the existing high rate of drug use in the county.

2. Establish clear guidelines for the schools to use in reporting incidents to the authorities.

Establish clear guidelines to avoid confusion concerning proper procedures.

3. Publish a resource manual.

Educate parents and families about programs that currently exist within the community.

Issues

Issues are the primary concerns or problems facing children in the county

Early Care Education

Children (0 – 5) are provided opportunities to fully develop emotionally, socially, physically, and cognitively and are ready to succeed.

There are inconsistencies in the services offered throughout the county

Action Steps

- 1) Acquiring autonomy for the Russell County Head Start programs rather than being grouped together with Lee County and under their control.
- 2) Work to create a separate Head Start Facility in the Ladonia area. Currently residents of Ladonia have to take their children over 25 miles to the closest Head Start facility.
- 3) Increase transportation to and from the existing Head Start facilities.

To continue to increase awareness of availability of health insurance

Action Steps

- 1) Enroll more children in ALL KIDS.
- 2) Make information concerning availability of existing health insurance programs available to parents at school registration.

Increase the capacity of current early care programs

Action Steps

- 1) Work to create a 0-3 program for the Phenix City Head Start program.
- 2) Increase transportation opportunities to and from the existing Head Start facilities.
- 3) Work to secure funding in order to increase capacity at the existing facilities.

Economic Security

Children grow up in a financially stable home where the child's basic needs can be met.

Increase the availability of affordable public transportation, primarily for the rural areas of the county

Action Steps

- 1) Identify current availability and needs.
- 2) Formulate a solution for these needs which will provide public transportation to these residents.
- 3) Find funding to make public transportation available.

Increase availability of job training resources to rural residents

Action Steps

- 1) Identify exactly what kind of training is needed.
- 2) Begin programs which will encourage students to graduate from high school.
- 3) Find programs which will help rural residents who do not have high school diplomas receive the GED.
- 4) Start job training classes in rural areas with high unemployment.

High rate of births to teen mothers

Action Steps

- 1) Promote awareness of how teenage parents relates to poverty.
- 2) Support program which would allow teenage parents to continue their education to decrease the likelihood of them remaining in poverty.

Education

Children learn the skills necessary to become productive citizens.

Reduce the truancy and dropout rate

Action Steps

- 1) Support the Russell County CHINS intervention program.
- 2) Expand the CHINS program to include children under 12 ears of age.

Strengthen existing after school programs

Action Steps

- 1) Work with local colleges and universities, as well as, civic clubs who might be able to offer volunteers for tutoring free of charge.
- 2) Establish a system where students would be able to receive tutoring with very little parental involvement.

Establish positive school behaviors early

Action Steps

- 1) Work on continuing to create new programs and strengthen existing programs that target at-risk youth.
- 2) Expand the CHINS intervention program for children under the age of 12.
- 3) Provide educational resources for parents so they can reinforce the importance of education and establishing a solid foundation.

Health

Children's (0 - 19) physical and mental well-being in the county.

Teen pregnancy

Action Steps

- 1) Increase education about teen pregnancy.
- 2) Work with programs which address both abstinence and safe sex practices.
- 3) Work to create new programs and strengthen existing programs which offer after school activities for youth.

Medical checks for infants

Action Steps

- 1) To educate parents and increase the number of infants who receive the correct shots.
- 2) Educate parents on health care for infants and the importance of health insurance.
- 3) To continue to increase the percentages of children with health insurance.

Access to mental health care

Action Steps

- 1) Work to educate parents so that they may identify the early signs of their child's mental health issues.
- 2) Work to bring a juvenile, inpatient mental health treatment facility to Russell County.
- 3) Work to find easier access to mental health facilities.

Parent Involvement Skills

Parents and guardians participation and effectiveness in fostering an environment for children to become mature, responsible and independent adults.

Lack of parental knowledge/skills necessary to assist their children in completing their homework assignments and perform successfully in school

Action Steps

- 1) To establish a homework hotline using local college students.
- 2) The parents could call the hotline with questions concerning the child's homework and receive answers.

Increase support for grandparent and other non-foster parents raising children that are not their biological children

Action Steps

- 1) Work to educate non-parent custodians on the process by which they can seek legal custody and child support.
- 2) Create a support network for non-parent custodians. This would be similar to the Foster Parents Association.

Increase parental knowledge concerning the programs which are available for their children

Action Steps

- 1) Create a resource manual which all parents would receive which lists with descriptions all the activities available for their children.

Safety

Children live free of abuse, neglect, crime, and drugs.

School safety

Action Steps

- 1) To meet with key players and set up a plan of action for school crisis.
- 2) To work to match school policies with state policies.
- 3) Find ways for students to feel safer in the schools.
- 4) Train educators to be able to recognize and handle issues that could affect student's safety.
- 5) Work with school administration for compliance and acceptance of school safety issues.

Juvenile substance abuse

Action Steps

- 1) Educate parents about the signs of drug abuse.
- 2) To set up a drug treatment program for children who are in the court system with drug problems.
- 3) Work to increase the availability and accessibility of substance abuse recovery and treatment programs in Russell County.

Parental substance abuse

Action Steps

- 1) Work to educate mandated reporters on the signs that a parent may be using narcotics.
- 2) Work to increase the availability of substance abuse programs in Russell County.
- 3) Study the long term effects of exposure to methamphetamines on children and implement programs to prepare for the problems juveniles who were exposed to meth.

Policy Recommendations

- Change the age in which teenagers may be able to drop out of school to an older age.
- Continue advertising for health insurance programs such as ALL KIDS and enroll all eligible children in ALL KIDS.
- Acquire autonomy for the Russell County Head Start programs rather than being grouped together with Lee County.
- Increase Head Start services in the county so that all children would have easy access to Head Start programs.
- Start a campaign to educate parents on the benefits of health care and the shots/checkups recommended for children who have not reached school age.
- Work toward local school policies that are consistent with state policies to avoid confusion on proper procedures.
- Research programs which can be implemented for programs for children who have been exposed to meth at young ages.
- Work to bring a juvenile mental health treatment facility to Russell County.
- Expand the CHINS intervention program to include children under 12 years old.
- This will alleviate some of the stress currently on DHR and help in our efforts to identify, early on, at risk youth.

Accomplishments

- Drastically increased the number of children with health insurance.
- Applied for 501 (c) 3 status.